
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

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NOAA04-R911
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 27, 2004

**NOAA AWARDS OVER \$240,000 TO THE
LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration awarded a \$241,250 grant to the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership to restore fisheries habitat in the Lower Columbia River and Tillamook estuaries. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funding creates a three-year agreement between the Estuary Partnership and NOAA's Restoration Center to select and fund habitat restoration projects that benefit living marine resources in the estuaries. The funds will support local, hands on habitat restoration projects in the lower Columbia River and Tillamook Bay. Both are estuaries of national significance and are part of the National Estuary Program administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"This partnership is a great example of leveraging federal dollars to enhance local projects that augment the overall salmon restoration efforts in the Northwest," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "This is the first time that the NOAA Restoration Center has formed a funding partnership with the National Estuary Program. It represents an important step in providing federal support of community-led estuary restoration."

"We are extremely pleased to have the strong support of NOAA Fisheries for the Estuary Partnership's habitat restoration program," said Debrah Marriott, executive director of the Estuary Partnership. "This award will go a long way in helping the Estuary Partnership achieve its objective of restoring 16,000 acres of habitat, including 3,000 acres of estuarine habitat, by 2010."

The Estuary Partnership is a collaborative program of the states of Oregon and Washington, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and economic interests and citizens. The organization works to increase habitat and habitat functions; improve land use practices to protect ecosystems; enhance education opportunities and provide information about the lower river and estuary to build stewardship among all citizens; improve coordination among multi-jurisdictions and interests; and reduce conventional and toxic pollutants. For more information on the Estuary Partnership, please visit their website at <http://www.lcrep.org>.

The NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program (CRP) has been working with community organizations and local governments to support locally driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities and provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. To date, nearly 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the CRP, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 34 years.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.